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*A Project of American Farmland Trust*

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Testimony in support of SB 817  
Planning and Development Committee  
Submitted by: Lisa Bassani, Project Director, Working Lands Alliance  
February 20, 2013

Senator Cassano, Representative Rojas and Committee members:

Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Working Lands Alliance in **support of SB 817**, An Act Establishing a Property Tax Program to Encourage the Preservation of Historic Barns.

The Working Lands Alliance is a broad-based coalition dedicated to preserving Connecticut's farmland. Our 200+ members reflect the diversity of organizations, businesses, and individuals that care deeply about our working lands and the farmers that steward them – land and farms that grow our economy and jobs, provide our food, make our communities special places to live, and connect us to the history of this state.

SB 817 authorizes municipalities to provide a tax incentive to owners of historic barns (barns 75 years and older that are recognized as historically important on a local, regional, or national level) who agree to maintain the structure during a ten-year easement period. This tax relief will provide incentive to owners of historic barn structures to make necessary repairs and maintenance, without which we will continue to lose these important cultural and historical landmarks.

SB 817 is modeled after a similar, and very successful program in New Hampshire. This barn tax incentive program has been in existence since 2003, and has enrolled 425 barn structures over those ten years. One municipality – Petersborough, NH – protected 23 barns alone during that time period. This successful model demonstrates the impact legislation like this can make in our efforts to protect our state's cherished historic agricultural structures.

I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony in support of SB 817, and urge the committee to act favorably on this bill.